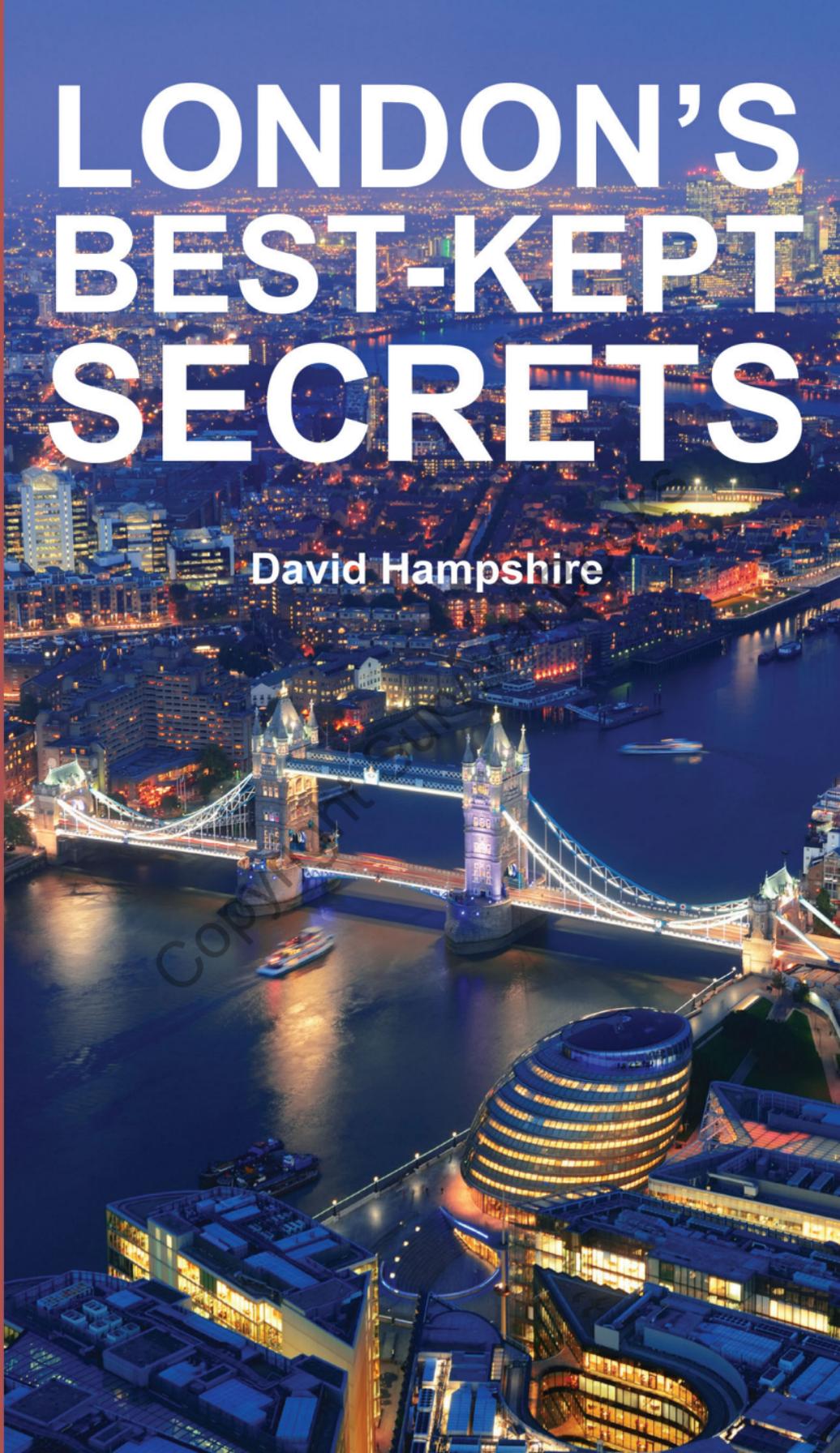


LONDON'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS

David Hampshire



LONDON'S BEST-KEPT SECRETS

Edited by David Hampshire



Survival Books • Bath • England

First published 2015

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Last, but not least, a special thank you to the many photographers – the unsung heroes – whose beautiful images add colour and bring London to life.

Disabled Access

Many historic public and private buildings don't provide wheelchair access, or provide wheelchair access to the ground floor only. Wheelchairs are provided at some venues, although users may need assistance. Most museums, galleries and public buildings have a WC, although it may not be wheelchair accessible. Contact venues directly if you have specific requirements. The Disabled Go website (disabledgo.com) provides more in-depth access information for some destinations

Reader's Guide

The notes below refer to the general information provided for each entry:

- ◆ **Address:** The contact details include the telephone number and website address, where applicable. You can enter the postcode to display a map of the location on Google and other map websites (if you're driving you can enter the postcode into your satnav).
- ◆ **Opening hours:** These can change at short notice, therefore you should confirm by telephone or check the website before travelling, particularly over Christmas/New Year and on bank holidays, when many venues are closed. Note that the last entry to museums and galleries is usually at least 30 minutes before the closing time.
- ◆ **Cost:** Prices are liable to change and are intended only as a guide. Many venues – such as museums and galleries – offer free entry. Buildings owned or managed by the National Trust or English Heritage offer free entry to members, and some other places offer discounts to members of these organisations. Most, but by no means all, venues offer concessions for retirees, students and the unemployed (etc.), and many also offer family tickets.
- ◆ **Transport:** The nearest tube or rail station is listed, although in some cases it may involve a lengthy walk. You can also travel to most venues by bus and to some by river ferry. Venues outside central London are usually best reached by car, although parking can be difficult or impossible in some areas. Most venues don't provide parking, particularly in central London, and even parking nearby can be a problem (and very expensive). If you need to travel by car, check the parking facilities in advance.

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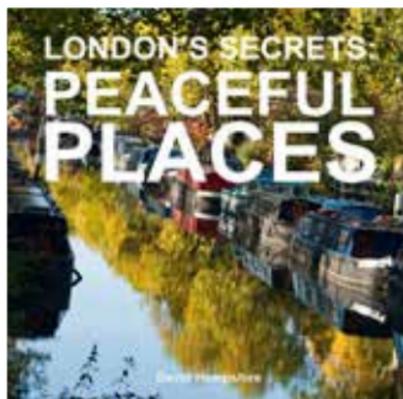
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London's Secrets: PEACEFUL PLACES



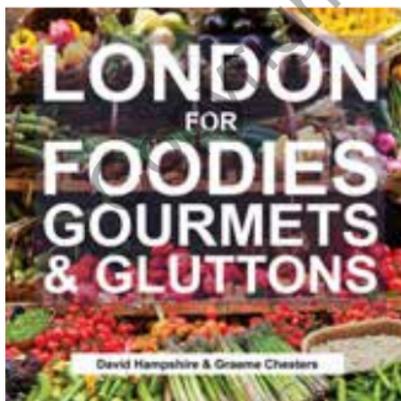
ISBN: 978-1-907339-45-5, 256 pages, hardback, £11.95

David Hampshire

London is one of the world's most exciting cities, but it's also one of the noisiest; a bustling, chaotic, frenetic, over-crowded, manic metropolis of over 8 million people, where it can be difficult to find somewhere to grab a little peace and quiet. Nevertheless, if you know where to look London has a wealth of peaceful places:

places to relax, chill out, contemplate, meditate, sit, reflect, browse, read, chat, nap, walk, think, study or even work (if you must) - where the city's volume is muted or even switched off completely.

LONDON FOR FOODIES, GOURMETS & GLUTTONS



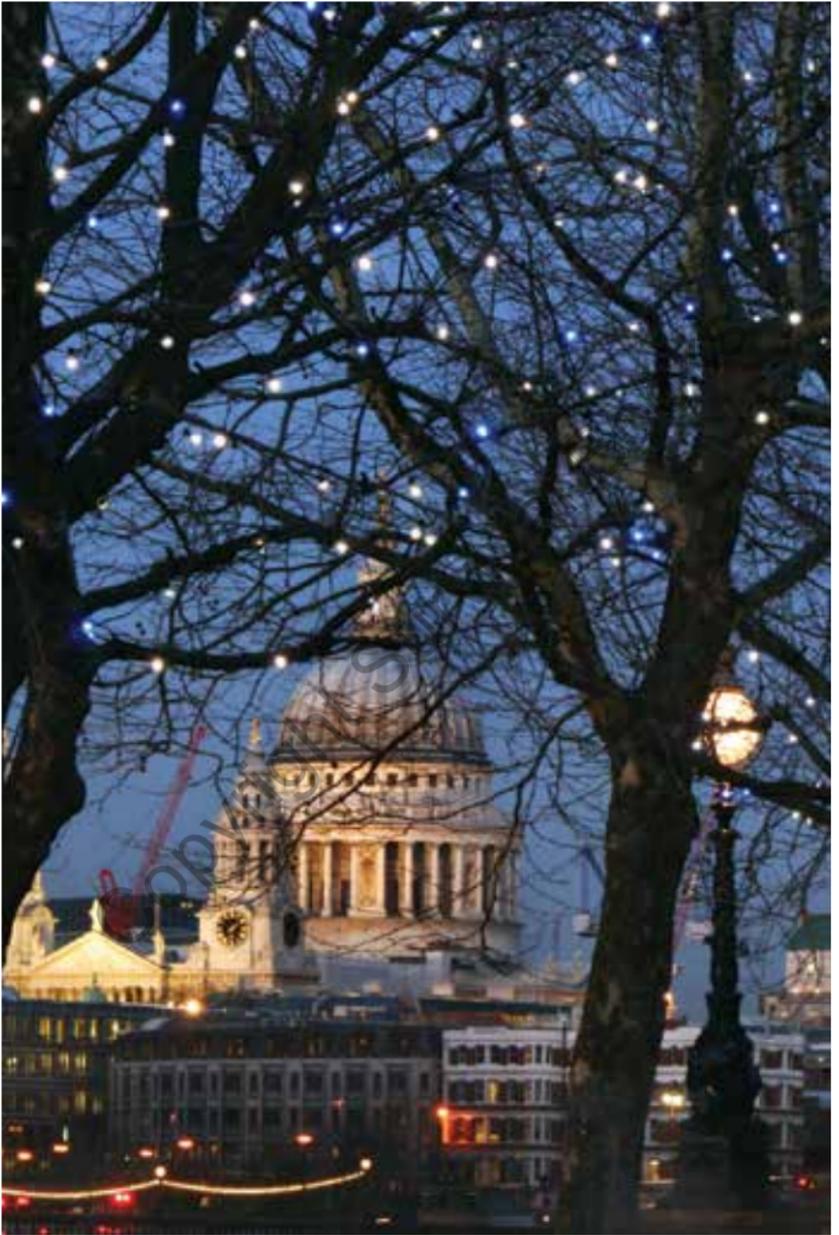
ISBN: 978-1-908282-76-6, 288 pages, hardback, £11.95

David Hampshire & Graeme Chesters

London for Foodies, Gourmets & Gluttons is much more than simply a directory of cafés, markets, restaurants and food shops. It features many of the city's best artisan producers and purveyors, plus a wealth of classes where you can learn how to prepare and cook food like the experts, appreciate fine wines and brew coffee like

a barista. And when you're too tired to cook or just want to treat yourself, we'll show you great places where you can enjoy everything from tea and cake to a tasty street snack; a pie and a pint to a glass of wine and tapas; and a quick working lunch to a full-blown gastronomic extravaganza.

see www.londons-secrets.com



Introduction

London is one of the world's leading tourist destinations, with a wealth of world-class attractions – more than any other city in the world – which draw millions of visitors a year, including amazing museums and galleries, beautiful parks and gardens, glorious churches and cathedrals, stunning palaces and grand houses, and much, much more. These are covered in numerous excellent tourist guides and need no introduction here. What aren't so well known are London's numerous smaller – but no less interesting – attractions, most of which are largely neglected by visitors and Londoners alike.

What our *London's Secrets* series of books does is take you off the beaten path – side-stepping the city's tourist-clogged major sights – to seek out its lesser-known, more off-beat and mysterious side. *London's Best-Kept Secrets* brings together the very best attractions – the 'greatest hits' – that we have discovered over the last five years. It includes some of the city's loveliest hidden gardens and parks, absorbing and poignant small museums, great art and architecture, beautiful ancient buildings, magnificent Victorian cemeteries, historic pubs, fascinating markets and much more.

Entries range from the enchanting Hill Garden to the magical canals of Little Venice, from the home of Britain's greatest naturalist to Dennis Severs' haunting home, from the moving Foundling Museum to the birthplace of Big Ben (and the Liberty Bell), the splendour of some of Wren's greatest churches to a lovely house designed by William Morris, and from the spectacular treasures of Syon House to atmospheric Kensal Green cemetery.

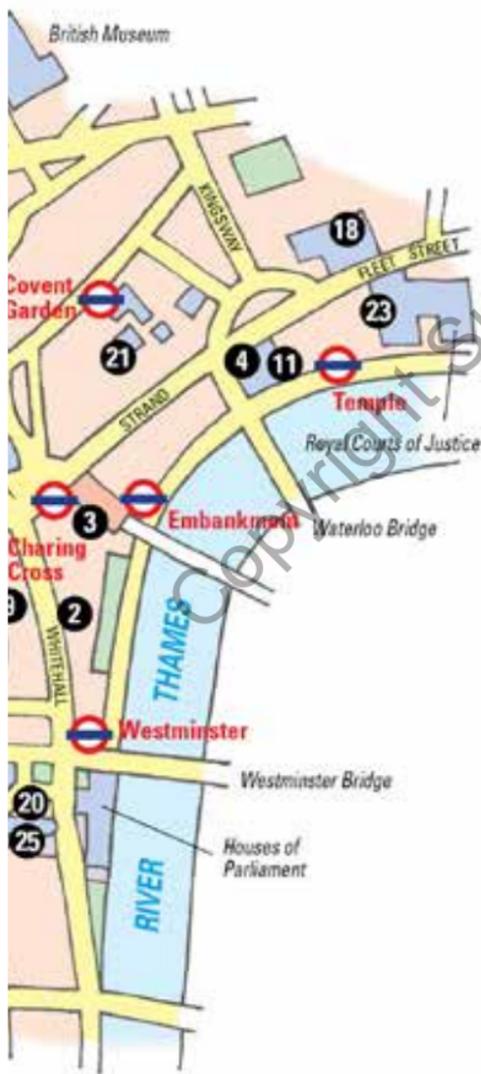
London's Best-Kept Secrets isn't intended as a walking guide, although many of the places covered are close to one another, particularly in central London and the City, where you can easily stroll between them, while some are situated in the suburbs. However, most are close to public transport links and relatively easy to get to. What's more the vast majority are free, so there's no excuse for not getting out there and exploring.

With a copy of *London's Best-Kept Secrets* to hand to inspire you, you need never be bored of London (or life). We hope you enjoy discovering the city's hidden secrets as much as we did.

David Hampshire
May 2015

CHAPTER 1

CENTRAL LONDON



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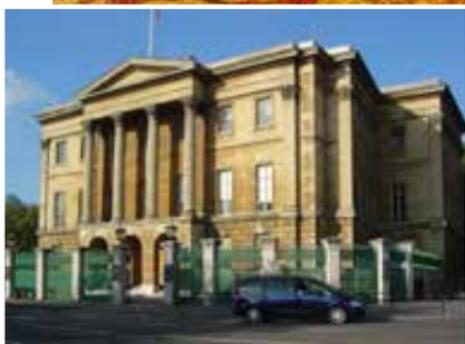
AT A GLANCE

Address: 149 Piccadilly, Hyde Park Cnr, W1J 7NT (020-7499 5676, www.english-heritage.org.uk/daysout/properties/apsley-house).

Opening hours: Apr-Oct, Wed-Sun and bank holidays, 11am to 5pm. See website for 'winter' opening times.

Cost: £8.30 adults, £7.50 concessions, £5 children (5-15), £21.60 family (2 adults, 3 children). English Heritage members free.

Transport: Hyde Park Cnr tube.



Duke of Wellington

APSLEY HOUSE

This Grade I listed building and residence of the Dukes of Wellington stands alone at Hyde Park Corner, on the southeast corner of Hyde Park. It's run by English Heritage as a museum and art gallery, although the current Duke of Wellington still uses part of the building as his London home.

Apsley House is sometimes known as Number One, London, as it was the first house seen by visitors after passing through the toll gates at Knightsbridge. Another nickname is the Wellington Museum. The house was originally built in red brick by Robert Adam (an influential Scottish neoclassical architect) between 1771 and 1778 for Lord Apsley, the Lord Chancellor. Some of Adam's interiors survive. It was acquired by the Duke of Wellington in 1817, who faced the house's brick walls with Bath stone, added the Corinthian portico and enlarged the property.

The interior has changed little since it was the home of the Iron Duke in the years following his victory over Napoleon at Waterloo. Many of the rooms were redesigned to reflect his growing status and influence (he was also a politician, becoming Prime Minister in 1828), and were a perfect setting for entertaining, including hosting an annual Waterloo Banquet to commemorate the famous victory, which continues to this day.

The 7th Duke gave the house and most of its contents to the nation in 1947, but the Duke retains the right to occupy just over half the property. The family's apartments are on the north side of the house, mainly on the second floor. The rest of the building is open to the public – the dazzling interiors are a magnificent example of Regency style – and there's a splendid collection of paintings and artworks that's one of the most intriguing in London and not nearly as well known as it should be.

There are over 200 paintings (some of them part of the Spanish Royal collection, which came into the Duke's possession after the Battle of Vitoria in 1813 – they'd been plundered from Spanish royal palaces by Napoleon Bonaparte's brother Joseph), including works by Brueghel the Elder, Goya, Landseer, Murillo, Rubens, Van Dyck and Velasquez.

On show are also the many gifts that the first Duke received from European rulers in gratitude for his military successes, including candelabras, porcelain, silver and gilt items, trophies, uniforms and weapons. A colossal (3.45m-high) nude marble statue of Napoleon by Canova stands in pride of place on the stairwell in the middle of the house.

“ See the Emperor with no clothes ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Whitehall, SW1A 2ER (020-3166 6155, www.hrp.org.uk/banquetinghouse).

Opening hours: Mon-Sun, 10am to 5pm. Closed bank holidays and Dec 24-26 and 1-2 Jan. It's sometimes closed for functions and events – check website.

Cost: £6.60 adults (£6.05 online), £5.50 concessions (£4.95 online), under-16s free.

Transport: Westminster, Embankment or Charing Cross tube.



BANQUETING HOUSE

This is one of the hidden delights of Westminster, often overlooked by the many visitors who throng the streets around Whitehall. It's the only remaining part of the Palace of Whitehall, which was the main residence of English monarchs in London from 1530 until 1698, when all except Inigo Jones's 1622 Banqueting House was destroyed by fire. Before the fire, the palace had grown to become the largest in Europe, larger even than the Vatican and Versailles.

The Banqueting House is significant in the history of English architecture, being the first building to be built in the neo-classical style that would transform the country. It was designed by Jones in a style influenced by Palladio, an Italian Renaissance architect, himself influenced by Greek and Roman architecture. (Inigo Jones was a revolutionary architect and designer whose work shook up English building design in the early 17th century.)

The Banqueting House was controversially refaced with Portland stone in the 19th century, although the details of the original façade were carefully preserved. Today, the building is Grade I listed and cared for by the independent charity, Historic Royal Palaces. It's spread over three floors and the term 'Banqueting House' is something of a misnomer, as it's a hall that was used not just for banquets but also for ceremonies, royal receptions and the performance of masques (a cross between a ball, an amateur dramatic production, a play and a fancy dress party, which was an entertainment as well as a way of expressing ideas about royal authority, responsibility and privileges).

The building's major attraction is its richly-painted ceiling, a masterpiece by the Antwerp-based artist and diplomat Peter Paul Rubens, the only surviving in-situ ceiling painted by him. It was commissioned by Charles I and celebrates the benefits of wise rule and his father's flawed idea of the Divine Right of Kings. Therefore it's rather ironic that Charles I, as a result of his unwise rule, was beheaded on a scaffold erected outside the hall in 1649, after losing the Civil War (1642-49); an upstairs window was removed to allow Charles I to step straight out onto the scaffold. It's fortunate that the ceiling survived the short period of Puritan rule that followed: Cromwell took over the building as his hall of audience in 1654, but he died in 1658 and the monarchy was restored in 1660.

“ *Where Charles I lost his head* ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: 36 Craven St, WC2N 5NF (020-7925 1405, www.benjaminfranklinhouse.org).

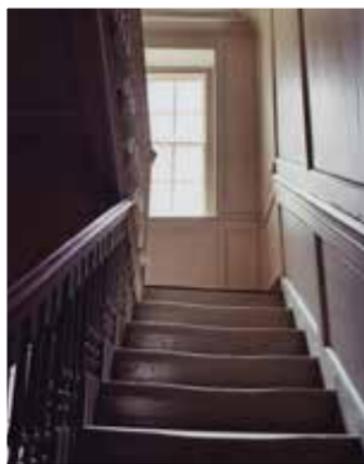
Opening hours: The 'Historical Experience' show can be seen Wed-Sun at noon, 1pm, 2pm, 3.15pm and 4.15pm. There are also guided 'architectural tours' tours on Mon at the same times.

Cost: Historical experience: £7 adults, £5 seniors and students, under 16s free. Architectural tour: £3.50 adults, under 16s free.

Transport: Charing Cross tube/rail or Embankment tube.



Benjamin Franklin



BENJAMIN FRANKLIN HOUSE

While sympathetic to the view that visiting a museum dedicated to a man known for discoveries about electricity and for being a politician might be less than thrilling, we urge you to try this intriguing, well-conceived exhibit. The Grade I listed, architecturally-important house was built around 1730 and retains many original features, including the central staircase, lathing, panelling, stoves, windows, beams and more.

It's the world's only remaining home of Benjamin Franklin, which opened to the public on 17th January 2006 on the anniversary of his 300th birthday. Franklin (1706-1790) was born in Boston, Massachusetts to an American mother and a British father. He lived and worked in this house for 16 years, on the eve of the American Revolution, and it has a special place in Anglo-American history, being the first de facto US embassy.

Benjamin Franklin's work as a philosopher, printer and more contributed to the Age of Enlightenment, and his scientific work meant that he came to be regarded as the father of electricity. As if this wasn't enough for one person, he was also a key founder of the United States, the only statesman to sign all four documents that created the new nation.

This is an inventive museum, which offers a good flavour of Franklin's many achievements and of the times in which he lived. The 'Student Science Centre' allows the recreation of experiments from his time in London, while the 'Scholarship Centre' on the top floor is a centre for the study of the many subjects that Franklin was involved with.

The Historical Experience takes a 'museum as theatre' approach, an innovative, entertaining way of presenting history. You're 'accompanied' by an actress who plays Polly Hewson, Franklin's landlady's daughter, who became like a daughter to him. The live performance, along with lighting, sound and visual projections, brings the whole 18th-century experience to life.

To end on a grisly note, the remains of four adults and six children were found at the property when it was being restored. Franklin's landlady's daughter Polly married a surgeon, who ran an anatomy school here. There's a small exhibit in the basement about medical history, which displays some of the 'Craven Street bones'.

“ *An American genius in London* ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Somerset House, Strand, WC2R 0RN (020-7848 2526, www.courtauld.ac.uk).

Opening hours: Daily, 10am to 6pm (until 9pm on a few selected Thursdays – see website). Closed 25-26th Dec.

Cost: £7 adults, £6 concessions; under 18s, full-time students and the unemployed, free.

Transport: Temple, Charing Cross, Embankment or Covent Gdn tube.



COURTAULD GALLERY

Although somewhat overshadowed by London's national galleries, The Courtauld Gallery contains a gem of an art collection, situated at the heart of The Courtauld Institute of Art, one of the world's leading centres for the study of art history and conservation. It's housed in Somerset House – designed by William Chambers (1723-1796) – a spectacular 18th-century building, once home to the Royal Academy of Art (1768). During summer months, 55 fountains dance in the courtyard, while in winter you can skate on London's favourite ice rink.

The gallery's celebrated collection of paintings ranges from the early Renaissance to modernist works of the 20th century, with a splendid array of Gothic and medieval paintings, plus Renaissance masterpieces by artists such as Cranach and Brueghel. Baroque highlights include a comprehensive display of iconic paintings by Rubens.

The art collection was begun by Samuel Courtauld (1876-1947), who donated an extensive collection of mainly French Impressionist and post-Impressionist paintings in 1932, enhanced by further gifts in the '30s and a bequest in 1948. In total, the gallery owns some 530 paintings and over 26,000 drawings and prints. The collection includes such masterworks as Manet's *A Bar at the Folies-Bergère* and a version of his *Déjeuner sur l'Herbe*; Renoir's *La Loge*; landscapes by Claude Monet and Camille Pissarro; a ballet scene by Edgar Degas and major works by Cézanne. Other paintings include van Gogh's *Self-Portrait with Bandaged Ear* (see left) and *Peach Blossoms in the Crau*; Gauguin's *Nevermore* and *Te Rerioa*; as well as important works by Seurat, Henri 'Douanier' Rousseau and Toulouse-Lautrec.

The collection extends into the 20th century with works by Modigliani, Matisse, Kandinsky and the Bloomsbury group, alongside masterpieces of German Expressionism and modern British art. The gallery also contains an outstanding collection of drawings and prints, and fine sculpture and decorative arts from Europe and the Middle East. Italian Renaissance wedding chests are displayed alongside marble reliefs and an outstanding collection of Renaissance *maiolica* (tin-glazed earthenware).

The Courtauld also houses an extensive collection of Iznik and Spanish lustreware ceramics, and superb items of Islamic metalwork, including pieces by the master craftsman Mahmud the Kurd. Furthermore, there's a priceless sculpture collection, with works by Henri Matisse, Auguste Rodin, César, Frank Dobson, Henry Moore, Barbara Hepworth, Antony Caro and Philip King.

“ A breathtaking art collection ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: 13 Berkeley St, W1J 8DU (020-7042 5730, <http://flamingcollection.com>).

Opening hours: Tue-Sat, 10am to 5.30pm. Closed 20th Dec to 5th Jan.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Green Pk tube.



FLEMING COLLECTION

The Fleming Collection is the finest assembly of Scottish art in private hands and the only dedicated museum granting public access to Scottish art all year round. The Collection was begun in 1968 by the Scottish banking firm Robert Fleming & Co, founded in Dundee. In 1968 the bank moved to a new building in Crosby Square in the City of London and it was decided to create a collection for the purpose of decorating the space.

This task was given to one of the bank's directors, David Donald. The only guideline was that the paintings should be by Scottish artists or Scottish scenes by any artists, to emphasise the bank's proud Scottish origins. Scottish art was largely unknown outside of Scotland until the '80s, making prices relatively low, enabling a large collection to be amassed in a short period.

The Collection comprises over 750 oils and watercolours from 1770 to the present day, including works by Raeburn, Ramsay, Wilkie, and the iconic paintings of the Highland Clearances, *The Last of the Clan* by Thomas Faed and *Lochaber No More* by John Watson Nicol. It's particularly noted for its works by William McTaggart, the Glasgow Boys, D.

Y. Cameron, Anne Redpath and a superb group of paintings by the Colourists. It remains a living and growing collection through further acquisitions.

The Collection was moved to its current premises on Berkeley Street in 2002 as a revolving exhibition based on works from the Collection and a showcase for contemporary Scottish art in London. This meant that the exhibition programme has had to juggle between showing works from the permanent collection as well as loan exhibitions. However, in 2010 the opportunity arose to rent the floor directly above the gallery and create additional space. This opened in 2011 as Gallery Two, showing selected works from the permanent collection, while temporary exhibitions, drawn from both private and national collections, are held in the original 'Gallery One'.

The Fleming Collection continues to grow, the main thrust being directed towards buying the work of young Scottish artists, while opportunities are also taken to fill historical gaps. A unique collection well worth a visit.

In March 2000, Flemings bank was sold to Chase Manhattan Bank, New York. To avoid the Collection being lost, the Fleming family funded a new charitable foundation, The Fleming-Wyfold Foundation, to purchase the Collection before the sale.

“ *The 'embassy' for Scottish art* ”

AT A GLANCE

Address: Inner Circle, Regent's Pk, NW1 4NX (www.londongardensonline.org.uk/gardens-online-record.asp?ID=WST108).

Opening hours: Daily, 7am to dusk.

Cost: Free.

Transport: Baker St or Regent's Pk tube.

